

**Joint Hearing for Senate Bills 388 & 389 and House Bills 4677 & 4678**  
**April 1, 2009**

Testimony of Murdock Jemerson, Chair, Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks  
And Director of the Lansing Department of Parks and Recreation

**The Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks was created by P.A. 392 of 2004. This Committee consists of 17 individuals appointed by the Director with the advice of the Natural Resource Commission. Committee members represent various recreational interests throughout the State of Michigan. The Committee exists to “advise and make recommendations to the governor, the Natural Resource Commission, and the legislature on state parks policy and provide guidance on state parks development, management, and planning issues.” The legislation also states that our mission is to “advise on financial planning and pursue adequate budget support for state parks.”**

**Responding to this charge, the Committee established various sub-committees including short and long term financial sub-committees. The short-term sub-committee recommended increasing the camping fees on half the parks and two seasons later increased the remaining parks which were both adopted. This action provided the necessary additional funding to carry our state park system through the last two potentially critical fiscal years.**

**The long term financial committee headed by Dr. Charles Nelson has worked for nearly three years to come up with recommendations to address the need for a sustainable funding strategy for the State Parks. Several options were evaluated which included:**

<b>License Plate Proposal</b>	<b>Sporting Good Tax</b>
<b>Property Tax Increase</b>	<b>Real Estate Transfer Tax</b>
<b>Petroleum Products Tax</b>	<b>Sales Tax Increase Proposal</b>
<b>Penny Per Sales Transaction</b>	<b>State-wide Accommodations Tax</b>
<b>General Fund Allocation – Done in 43 States - \$0.00 from the Michigan Legislature</b>	

**After reviewing the pros & cons of each, the License Plate Proposal, which is very successful in Montana, was selected for further study and action.**

**These bills will provide not only the State Parks the necessary long term funding for capital improvements and operations, but they will also provide badly needed funding for our state forest campground and pathway system, our cultural and historic resources in State Parks, and to local units with matching development grants. As a local parks and recreation director in charge of a very large and aging park system, I see this as an opportunity to possibly double the funding of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund development grant dollars and invest in our communities. Here in Lansing, we are very appreciative of the thousands of Trust Fund dollars this community has received for the Lansing River Trail. We**

should not pass up this opportunity to provide the much needed financial investment in our local parks and recreation departments. "Close to home" recreational resources will become more and more relevant given today's economic climate. To find proof of this need one only needs to look at the past five years of MNRTF grant requests and compare it to the available development dollars. (See Chart Below) Only 28% of all grant applications received funding.

I would like to encourage you to support these bills and help protect our State and Local Park systems for future generations to come.

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
GRANTS MANAGEMENT  
MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION ANALYSIS  
YEARS 2004 - 2008**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED</b>	<b>TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT REQUESTED</b>	<b>NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FUNDED</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF APPLICATIONS FUNDED</b>	<b>TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT AWARDED</b>
2004	111	\$ 24,112,826	24	22%	\$ 5,629,700
2005	99	\$ 18,475,598	27	27%	\$ 6,449,900
2006	101	\$ 19,937,067	22	22%	\$ 6,261,900
2007	99	\$ 23,762,900	30	30%	\$ 7,688,700
2008	94	\$ 21,486,900	37	39%	\$ 10,052,500